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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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OUTDOOR BEAUTY

CURRENT JOURNAL RECORDS

Natural Beauty. Much of the brilliance and excitement of nature have been captured in one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's most recent publications. "A Guide to Natural Beauty," a 32-page booklet illustrated with 36 color photographs, shows how people can enhance the beauty of their gardens and communities. This practical, how-to-do-it booklet brings together knowledge gained from the Department's research, plant exploration and development, soil and water conservation, and management of the National Forests and Grasslands. The booklet lists USDA services and tells how they may be obtained. "A Guide to Natural Beauty" may be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for 55 cents. Please include your zip code.

Subtropical Shrub. A new ornamental shrub named the "Rosemound" dombeya has been propagated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Horticulturists predict it will be excellent for landscaping in southern Florida and other tropical and subtropical areas. "Rosemound" has dense foliage, and is rounded and symmetrical with dust-rose flowers which almost cover the foliage in late autumn. It grows to 6 feet, and although it seldom produces seed, it can be rooted from cuttings. "Rosemound" may also be tested in the North as a specimen plant for conservatories and as a florist pot plant. The original seeds are believed to have come from Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. Plants aren't available yet, but nurserymen are propagating them now and they should be ready by 1968.

Plan Ahead. Take advantage of cooler weather and give your lawn a head start. It's best to fertilize established grasses in the fall, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists report. Fall fertilizers stimulate additional root growth and make grass more vigorous and attractive in the summer. Good commercial fertilizers containing nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, in percentage ratios of 10-6-4, 10-10-10, or similar analyses, are best for established lawns. Apply 10 to 15 pounds for each 1,000 square feet of lawn. Plan two applications, a month apart, to avoid burning the grass, and water the lawn well after each application.



Conservation Gardens. The Crider Memorial Garden, the only one of its kind in the United States was recently dedicated at Beltsville, Maryland. The U.S. Department of Agriculture garden contains two acres with 216 samples of plants, each of which is adapted to meet a particular conservation requirement in different regions in the United States. The plants have been successfully used for streambanks, impoundment structures, wildlife habitats and many other conservation plantings. Named after Dr. Franklin J. Crider, who initiated tests for grasses and legumes when they weren't available for conservation needs, the Garden is open to visitors and interested conservation groups.

New Crapemyrtles. U.S. Department of Agriculture horticulturists have developed four hardy new varieties of crapemyrtles with good resistance to powdery mildew. Plants aren't available to the public yet, but they'll be released to cooperating nurserymen for propagation and should be ready for homeowners in 2 to 3 years. The four varieties--Catawba, Conestoga, Potomac and Powhatan--are hardy as far north as Washington, D.C. where other crapemyrtles have been severely damaged.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Last of the Mule Train. Mules may finally lose their job in the National Forests. They currently haul equipment over steep and winding trails, but a U.S. Department of Agriculture engineer has developed a gyro-stabilized land vehicle that is threatening their existence. This "gyro carrier" has three wheels in a line and is balanced by a 180-pound gyro that spins at 5,500 revolutions per minute. It can carry 800 pounds of cargo, climb over ordinary obstacles, and travel through rough and narrow forest trails. But that's not all it does. The gyro carrier can climb a 60 percent grade, while the normal maximum for roads is only 9 percent. It has tremendous potentials and yet it stems from the same simple principle that keeps a child's top spinning. The land vehicle was developed to carry tools and equipment over the 102,729 miles of trails in the 187 million acre National Forest System, so don't be too surprised if you run into this unusual-looking machine when you're camping or visiting the National Forests.

Sad Farewell. Automation may replace the thumb--that well-known device shoppers use in order to evaluate peaches, tomatoes and plums. U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers have developed an instrument to test fruits and vegetables in the market, and eventually the instrument may even tell producers when to harvest their crops and packers when to take the produce out of storage. Engineers are using sound to measure firmness. A normal product allows sound to pass through it at a certain frequency, so if the frequency varies it's a sign the product is either too firm or too ripe.

FOOD FACTS

Plentiful Foods. Turkey is again the feature on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's plentiful food list. But other foods--like orange juice, seasonal vegetables, peanuts, and peanut products--will also fill the wise shopper's basket during September.

Flavor First. To make sure you're getting the best flavor from your chicken, use a fresh chicken within two days after you purchase it or else freeze it, U.S. Department of Agriculture home economists advise. Frozen chickens can be stored up to 12 months at zero degrees, but when you take them out for cooking it's best to thaw them in the refrigerator for about 1 day.

A Tremendous Shopping List. Imagine food shopping for millions of children! That's what the U.S. Department of Agriculture does each year to help feed school children. This spring the Department bought 44.2 million pounds of beef at the cost of \$28.7 million. This purchase will provide 11 to 12 servings of meat to over 20 million children this fall. All beef purchased was USDA Choice quality or better and will provide a significant contribution to improved and reasonably priced lunches.

Shrink-Proof Meat? Well, not quite. But you can serve more meat if the original cut shrinks less. So try cooking meat at low to moderate temperatures. There's less shrinkage--and the meat is more tender, juicy, flavorful and uniformly cooked. And to insure that the meat's done, the U.S. Department of Agriculture advises you to make sure the center of the meat is brought up to at least 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

Head Start Recipes. Wholesome meals are the best way to get a real "head start". That's why the U.S. Department of Agriculture has prepared a guide of small, but nutritious meals for preschool children from low-income families. These children are part of Head Start, which serves breakfast, lunch or snacks. The meals are wholesome, yet inexpensive, and easy to prepare. The 130-page guide, geared to small portions for 25, 50 or more children, covers cereal products, soups, main dishes, vegetables, sauces, salads, sandwiches and desserts. Recipes are given in an easy-to-follow form, while a special feature lets food buyers tell at a glance how much is needed for each recipe. Single free copies of "Food Buying Guide and Recipes" are available from Project Head Start, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1220 19th Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20506. Please use your zip code.

Real Honey. Natural honey has its own built-in preservative to prevent mold and fermentation, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture food specialists. Honey may darken or crystalize when it gets old, but this doesn't hurt it.

PUBLICATIONS

Calendar Check. It may seem a little early to start thinking about spring-flowering bulbs, but it's really not. U.S. Department of Agriculture horticulturists report spring-flowering bulbs must have time to develop roots before winter. Plant them not later than the end of September in the North, and late October in the South. If you're interested in soil preparation, plant care, or instructions for specific bulbs, write for "Spring-Flowering Bulbs," Leaflet No. 439, from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, D.C. 20402. The price is five cents and please include your zip code.

When the Freezer Stops. When your home freezer stops it's time for you to act. And the sooner you act, the better the chance of keeping the food from spoiling. U.S. Department of Agriculture specialists suggest you keep the freezer closed to retain the cold. Open it only if you're adding dry ice or taking food out so it can be moved to a locker plant. But when the current is on again, how do you know if the food is safe to use? "What To Do When Your Freezer Stops," Leaflet No. 321, will answer this question, and many others. Single free copies are available for a postcard request from the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include your zip code.

HANDY HINTS

Do's and Don'ts of Dishwashers. Are you getting the best performance from your dishwasher? U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers offer these suggestions after testing six different dishwashers under varied conditions. Although food removal increases as the water temperature increases there is little benefit from temperatures higher than 140 degrees Fahrenheit, as far as physical removal of soil is concerned, the scientists report. Rather, the quality of the water seems more important. All the machines did better with soft water than hard water. Dishwashing compounds suited to your local water conditions can help, but don't try to solve hard water problems by using more detergent.

Fall Suit Shopping. Whether it's for back-to-school or back-to-work, carefully consider the men's suits you buy. U.S. Department of Agriculture specialists report that in men's suits much of the quality is hidden and it shows up only after wear and cleaning. However, quality can be discovered by checking these things:

- * Lining, interfacing and pocketing that are made of closely-woven material.
- * Linings and interfacings that are soft and supple when crushed in the hand. Roll the tip of the collar and lapel to see if they flip back into place as they should.
- * Pocket openings that are reinforced inside with light-weight linen.
- * Trousers with generous seams and pockets.
- * Matching patterns at the seams.

The Big Stretch. Some cotton knit T-shirts lose their shape after laundering more easily than others. U.S. Department of Agriculture clothing researchers find that the cause is fabric structure. The tiny knit loops in the fabric, normally plump and round, may have been stretched during manufacturing. After laundering, these loops relax, return to their normal shape, and the garment becomes shorter and wider. Look for shirts with firm, even knitting. Avoid a fabric that has thin places. By examining the knit carefully you can often tell if the knit loops are round and relaxed, or are long and stretched. The more round the loops, the better the chance that the knit will retain its shape through repeated washing and drying.

For information about items in this issue, write: Editor of SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250